The Marinid Naval Force According to Historical Perspective

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Abstract

The Marinid Kingdom (1215-1465) was a Muslim kingdom which emerged in al-Maghrib in the medieval period. This kingdom had a powerful naval force which could rival those of Christian kingdoms. The purpose of this article is to study the history and development of the Marinid naval force. On the whole, this study adopts a qualitative study approach by historical and content analysis of primary and secondary sources which discuss the history of the Marinid naval force. Research findings show that the Marinid Kingdom had strengthened its naval system to rival enemy might, particularly Christian kingdoms which controlled part of the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, the naval force was given attention as a defense measure to protect sovereignty and to carry out military expeditions in al-Andalus. This capacity to build and strengthen the naval force supported the political stability of the Marinid Kingdom in al-Maghrib territory.

Keywords: *Marinid kingdom; military; naval force; al-Maghrib; al-Andalus;*

1. Introduction

The naval force was an essential component of Marinid's military capability, consisting of the formation of a Marinid naval fleet for the purpose of military activities, particularly in the territorial waters of al-Maghrib. This situation is supported by the geographical location of al-Maghrib territory which was controlled by the Marinid Kingdom and faced the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. Hence, the formation and development of the naval force was essential in defence against enemy threats coming from the direction of the sea, particularly the naval forces of Castile and Aragon. As with the ground forces, the Marinid Kingdom emphasized efforts strengthening its naval force. Suitable equipment and armament for the naval fleet were built and produced. In addition, the building of naval bases, fortresses and watchtowers along the coast of al-Maghrib was also part of the Kingdom's efforts to match the strength of other powers, particularly the Christian powers which controlled part of the Mediterranean Sea. The history of naval forces in the Mediterranean waters have been much debated and highlighted by both Muslim and Western scholars, such as al-'Abbadi and 'Abd al-'Aziz (Undated) and Pyror (1988). However, such discussions are more focused on the development of naval forces in the early medieval century. All the same, the history of the Marinid naval force has been touched on and briefly analysed together with the naval forces of contemporaneous kingdoms, such as the Almohads (Ar. *al-Muwahhidun*), the Hafsids (Ar. *Banu Hafs*), the Abdalwadids (Ar. *Banu 'Abd al-Wad*), the Nasrids (Ar. *al-Dawlah al-Nasriyyah*), Castile and Aragon. The purpose of this article is to study the history and development of the Marinid naval force.

2. An Overview of the Marinid Kingdom

The Marinids was a Muslim Berber Kingdom which once existed and controlled al-Maghrib. The kingdom which originated from the Banu Zanatah appeared and lasted for a period of two and half centuries, from 1215 to 1465. According to Ibn Khaldun (1968), Banu Marin was a branch of the Banu Zanatah from the Banu Wasin. This can be observed from their *nasab* (ancestry), that is, Banu Marin b. Wartajin b. Mahukh b. Judayi b. Fatin b.Yaddar b. Yakhfit b. Abd 'Allah b. Wartanbis b. al-Mu'izz b. Ibrahim b. Sahik b. Wasin. They had family relations with Banu Yalumi and Madyunah.

It was ascertained that the political involvement of the Marinids began in 1195 when they aided Almohads in the

Battle of Alarcos in al-Andalus (Shatzmiller, 1991). The Marinids' involvement became more apparent when they opposed Almohads from 1213 until 1215. Led by 'Abd al-Haqq b. Mahyu, they frequently waged war against the Almohads. The outcome was the weakening of Almohads and several lands of al-Maghribi were conquered by the Marinids, among them, Meknes (1244), Fez (1248) and Sijilmasah (1255). The opposition of the Marinids to Almohads finally succeeded when Marrakesh, the capital city of the kingdom, was captured in the year 1269 A.D. (Shatzmiller, 1991). The conquest had wiped out the Almohads and at once established the Marinids as the new ruler of al-Maghrib.

The Marinids had 26 sultans from the same lineage of descent. Their competency and powerful deliberation had made the Marinids a strong kingdom in North Africa even though there was stiff competition from the kingdoms of Zayyanid centred in Tilimsan and the Hafsid in Tunis respectively. The process of strengthening and consolidation continued until it reached its era of glory under the rule of Sultan Abu al-Hasan 'Ali (1331-1351) (Le Tourneau, 1970; Julien, 1970; Oliver, 1977).

His reign witnessed the excellence of the Marinids in various fields, including politics, economics and social field. During this time, the Marinids also succeeded in controlling part of al-Andalus when they helped the Nasrids fend off an attack of a Muslim army from the north of the Iberian Peninsula. The Marinids also extended their control over the Zayyanids and Hafsids when they occupied Tilimsan (1337) and Tunis (1347) (Shatzmiller, 1991). There was also rapid development of economic, social and intellectual activity during this period. Cultural activity in arts and architecture was so vibrant resulting in the construction of many mosques, *madrasah* and *al-zawaya* (corners) (Harakat, 1984).

The Marinids began to decline after the demise of Sultan Abu 'Inan Faris (1351-1358). Nevertheless, the Marinid Kingdom survived for another hundred years until its downfall in the year 1465. Various conflicts, both external and internal, amongst which disputes and differences in the administration, fights for positions, external threats, particularly from the Christian Castile and Portugal, was a factor for the deterioration of the Marinids. Finally the Marinids' power was wiped out from al-Maghrib and replaced by the power of the Wattasids (Ar. *Banu Wattas*) who was previously the *wazir* of the Marinids (Garcia-Arenal, 1978).

Nevertheless, the Marinids will always be remembered as one of the greater Muslim kingdoms in al-Mahgrib. Its great contribution in the development of the Islamic civilization becomes important information in historical works and the Islamic civilization. In fact, North Africa is the birthplace of many prominent Muslim intellectual figures or scientists, among whom were Ibn Battutah, Ibn Marzuq and Ibn Khaldun, during the reign of the Marinids (Jamsari et al., 2012a; Jamsari et al. 2012b; Jamsari et al., 2014).

3. Development of the Marinid Naval Force

Upon the successful conquest of al-Maghrib al-Aqsa territory, the Marinid Kingdom strengthened its naval force. However, this shift in attention came quite late in time compared to the ground forces due to the fact that the whole Marinid operation against the Almohad kingdom was on land. In addition, the original place of residence for the Marinid was in the desert or mountainous areas. Hence, ground battle skills were given prior attention in enhancing military capability before attention was shifted to the naval force.

The naval force was given attention when Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub came to power as Marinid ruler. Conquest over Tanjah in the year 672 and request for military assistance from the Nasrid Kingdom had caused the Marinid Kingdom to make efforts in enhancing naval facilities and capabilities, such as the building of *Dar al-Sina'ah* at Tanjah and Sala. The role of *Dar al-Sina'ah* during the Marinid era was not much different from its role during the era of the previous dynasty. *Dar al-Sina'ah* previously functioned as a naval base and shipyard centre to build and overhaul shipping vessels. *Dar al-Sina'ah* at Sala was built under the supervision of an Andalusian engineer, Muhammad b. 'Ali b. 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. al-Hajj al-Ishbiliyyi (d.714) (al-'Abbadi & 'Abd al-'Aziz, Undated).

Other efforts carried out during the reign of Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub were building and restoring the city or area of the naval base. For example, the Marinid Kingdom had built Algeciras as a settlement and base for the naval force. In addition, fortresses and watchtowers along the shore were also built in the city to safeguard against enemy threats, particularly Christian powers who were constantly attempting to annex the Straits of Gibraltar (al-'Abbadi & 'Abd al-'Aziz, Undated). The location of the Straits of Gibraltar between two territories, al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, had attracted the interest of Christian powers to annex it. If the straits were successfully controlled, chances of the Christian powers to cross over to al-Maghrib would be easier and the boundaries between the Christian powers in al-Andalus with the Marinid Kingdom would be closer, namely, the Straits of Gibraltar. This would even increase pressure on the position of the Nasrid Kingdom which was seen as under the siege of Christian powers around it. For this reason, the Marinid Kingdom endeavoured to make Algeciras into a military camp to offset the advance of Christian powers and attempt to sow influence on Andalusian soil.

The development of the Marinid navy reached its peak during the rule of Sultan Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali. Its strength is measured by its capability to defeat the Christian navy in a battle at the Straits of Gibraltar. This victory had eased the crossing over of the Marinid military to al-Andalus before they lost to the Christians in the Battle of Tarifa or the Battle of *Rio Salado* in the year 741/1340 (al-‘Abbadi & ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, Undated; Marcais, 1991). Al-Salawi (1954) corroborates this by stating that the size of the Marinid crew and their military equipment during the rule of Sultan Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali was the biggest in the history of the Marinid naval force. For example, Sultan Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali had led a fleet of 600 vessels at the time of invading Tunis.

The Marinid naval force of the Sultan Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali era experienced a revolution towards enhancement of strength and capability. In this era, the building of naval facilities was not just focused on *Dar al-Sina*‘*ah* but watchtowers, control towers and fortresses were also constructed along the coast.These constructions were for the purpose of monitoring and safeguarding the security of coastal waters from enemy invasion. The Marinid kingdom also strengthened its naval forces to match Christian naval power. Gibraltar was made the naval force centre and various military constructions were built for military use such as *Dar al-Sina*‘*ah*, fortresses, citadels and watchtowers (al-‘Abbadi & ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, Undated).

Upon taking over the Marinid Kingdom, Sultan Abu ‘Inan Faris continued with his father’s efforts in strengthening the naval force. He used the naval force in his mission to regain control the whole of al-Maghrib territory. In the year 752/1352, he deployed a 1000-man strong naval force to al-Qayrawan to regain control of al-Maghrib al-Adna territory (al-‘Abbadi & ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, Undated). However, after the death of Sultan Abu ‘Inan Faris in the year 759/1358, the Marinid naval force was unable to defeat the Christian forces, so the Nasrid navy had to single-handedly fight the Christian forces in the Straits of Gibraltar (Musa, 1983). This situation was caused by an internal political crisis in the Marinid palace, such as the struggle for the throne and extreme dominance by the *al-Wuzara*’class, worsened by the spread of the ‘Black Death’ epidemic and threat of the Hafsids and the Abdalwadids, which so undermined the Marinid position that they were unable to focus on building up the naval force (al-Hariri, 1987).

The Marinid naval force became weaker and could not seriously repel enemy strength, particularly the naval forces of Castile, Aragon and Portugal after the reign of Sultan Abu ‘Inan Faris. This decline led to the collapse of the Marinid Kingdom in the year 1465. The Marinid force during this time was unable to adopt an offensive stance and acted only in defence against enemy invasion. The enemies took advantage of the Marinid political chaos. For example, Abu Salim Ibrahim had requested assistance from the Castile Kingdom to seize the Marinid throne after the demise of Abu ‘Inan Faris. The Castile Kingdom had sent its naval force to the waters of Tanjah and Sabtah as support for Abu Salim Ibrahim. This line of action is seen as putting pressure on Abu Salim Ibrahim’s rival at once enabling the former to seize the Marinid throne in the year 760/1359 (Musa, 1983).

The weakness of the Marinid Kingdom, including the aspect of naval force, was also exploited by the Portugal Kingdom. The Portuguese naval force had attacked and annexed Sabtah in the year 818/141. In spite of a stiff resistance from the Marinid force, victory was on the side of the Portuguese naval force. This victory spurred on the Portuguese to further advance against Tanjah in the year 841/1438. The Portuguese went on to annex Qasr al-Majaz, or al-Qasr al-Saghir, in the year 873/1458 followed by the conquest of Tanjah in the year 869/1464 (Musa, 1983). The inability of the Marinid naval force was a disaster for it failed to check the advancing Portuguese. In fact, the annexation of Sabtah in the year 818/1415 was considered as setting the trail for Portugal to discover the sea route to the East such that Portugal was able to conquer several places including Malacca in the year 917/1511 (Ashari & Jamsari, 2009). Generally, the Marinid naval force was formed and strengthened for the purpose of controlling the Straits of Gibraltar, at once offsetting Christian naval forces. This can be seen from transport vessels crossing over to al-Andalus during the era of Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub. Similarly, during the rule of Sultan Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali, the Marinid naval force had to face opposition from the Christian naval forces before they could transport ground military to al-Andalus to fight the Christian military in the Battle of Tarifa in the year 1340 (al-‘Abbadi & ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, Undated). In addition, the Marinid naval force was formed for the purpose of assisting ground forces, particularly in the mission of expanding its dominion over the whole of al-Maghrib territory. For example, the Marinid naval force had departed for Tunis to assist the ground military led by Sultan Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali (al-Salawi, 1954). Enhancement of the naval force was an important strategy to strengthen the Marinid position in the al-Maghrib al-Adna territory and to provide assistance to the ground military in the face of resistance, particularly from the military of the Hafsids and the Arab tribes.

4. Participation of Various Arab Tribes

As with the ground forces, the majority of the naval force comprised of the Zanatah Berber tribe due to their dominance in the Marinid administrative and military affairs. However, there were several Arab tribes such as the Ma‘qal, Sufyan,

Jashm, Zaghbah and Riyah, who also joined the Marinid naval force. They fought in the military, particularly in al-Andalus, because they were attracted to the *jihad* (holy struggle) slogan declared by the Marinid ruler. The call to *jihad* propagated to fight the Christian forces in al-Andalus attracted the Arab tribes to join the Marinid naval force, whether as naval commanders, mercenaries or even volunteers.

The expertise and skills possessed by the Arab tribes, particularly in terms of making weaponary, were fully utilised by the Marinid Kingdom. The Arab tribes were skilled in making and using weapons such as swords, bows, arrows, knives and *manjaniq* (catapults). These weapons were used not only by ground military but by the navy too. Hence, the skills of Arab tribes in weaponry were optimally utilised by the Marinid Kingdom to strengthen the naval force. This caused many of the navy personnel from the Arab tribes to reside in al-Maghrib territory. Their participation was more obvious in times of battle between the Marinid naval force and Christian forces at the Straits of Gibraltar (Ahmad, 1983). This was motivated by the spirit of the Arab tribes in response to the call of *jihad* by the Marinid Kingdom to fight the Christian powers and assist their Muslim brothers in al-Andalus.

In addition, the Marinid Kingdom also used the services of Banu al-'Azfi as personnel of the naval force, for their capabilities and sea battle skills, particularly the inhabitants of Sabtah city, which was situated on the coast facing the Straits of Gibraltar. This location gave the Banu al-'Azfi the advantage of skills which was fully utilised by the Marinid by giving them full autonomy to govern Sabtah under the patronage of the Marinid Kingdom. In return, Banu al-'Azfi allowed the Marinid Kingdom to build *Dar al-Sina'ah in* Sabtah. Due to the good relations between them, the Kingdom appointed some figures from Banu al-'Azfi to command the naval forces. Among these appointed men was Yahya b. Abi Talib al-'Azfi, appointed by Sultan Abu Sa'id 'Uthman in the year 714 A.H. (Musa, 1983). The political diplomacy adopted by the Marinid ruler in dealings with Banu al-'Azfi gave the advantage of strengthening the Marinid navy. The Marinid ruler wisely realized that their capabilities and sea skills could be utilised to strengthen the naval force.

5. Commander of Naval Force

The position of navy commander was important in the Marinid naval system and functioned as commander in battles against the enemy. In addition, the position also played the role of monitoring every development of *Dar al-Sina'ah* built on the coast of al-Maghrib territory and supervising the fortresses and watchtowers in surveillance and security of the coastal waters. The name of the Marinid commander of naval forces was not different from that of the Almoravid (Ar. *al-Murabitun*) and the Almohad eras. During the era of the Almoravids, the position was known as *qa'id al-bahr* or *qa'id al-astul al-bahri*, while during the Almohad rule, it was known as *qa'id asatil al-bahrayn* or *sahib imarat al-bahr*. The position was similarly named for both the Marinid and the Almoravid eras as *qa'id al-bahr*. However, there was a specific name for the position in the Marinid era, which was *al-Mulandu* (Ibn Khaldun, 1968; Musa, 1983).

As with the Almoravids and Almohads, the Marinids appointed for the position a figure with capability, competence and expertise in the skills of war at sea, and thus an individual with such skills was appointed from amongst the Sabtah inhabitants. For example, Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub had appointed Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Qasim al-Rundahi. In addition, Sultan Abu 'Inan Faris also appointed from the Sabtah, Ahmad b. al-Khatib and Sulayman b. Dawud as commander of the naval forces (Musa, 1983). However, apart from amongst the Sabtah inhabitants, the Marinid ruler also appointed a competent figure from outside for this position, such as Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Ahmar, a kinsman of Banu al-Ahmar, to command the troops based at Tanjah. Another Andalusian figure who played such a role was Abu al-Qasim b. Abi Bakr. He commanded the Marinid naval troops based at Gibraltar (al-'Abbadi & 'Abd al-'Aziz, Undated; Harakat, 1984).

The Marinid Kingdom also appointed figures from amongst the Banu al-'Azfi as commander of its naval forces. The Banu al-'Azfi, who lived in Sabtah, were the *wali* (guardians) of the city and had sea expertise. Thus, for their position and abilities, the figures appointed during the rule of Sultan Abu Sa'id 'Uthman were three brothers, namely, Abu Zayd 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Talib al-'Azfi, Muhammad b. 'Ali al-'Azfi and Abu Zakariyya al-'Azfi. Their appointment was not only for the position of commander of naval forces in battle times, but they were also given authority to administer Sabtah, monitor the development of *Dar al-Sina'ah* and report all happenings in Sabtah to the Marinid ruler in Fez (al-'Abbadi & 'Abd al-'Aziz, Undated).

The manner of appointing the commander of naval forces was continued by successors of Sultan Abu Sa'id 'Uthman. For example, Sultan Abu al-Hasan 'Ali had appointed Muhammad b. 'Ali al-'Azfi as commander of the navy in the battle of al-Ziqaq in the year 741/1340 between the Marinid and the naval forces of Castile and Aragon (al-'Abbadi & 'Abd al-'Aziz, Undated; Musa, 1983). The appointment of figures from Banu al-'Azfi was considered a wise move by the Marinid ruler in maintaining harmony and mutual respect between the two parties at once enhancing the strength and capabilities of the Marinid naval force, particularly in terms of manpower resource. Nevertheless, part of the mission of

the Marinid naval force was led by a number of sultans or princes themselves, particularly when a battle occurred. For example, Sultan Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali had led a fleet of about 600 vessels towards al-Maghrib to regain his throne which had been seized by Abu ‘Inan Faris (al-Salawi, 1954).

In addition, Sultan Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali had commanded his prince, Abu Malik, to lead a force to al-Andalus to re-conquer Gibraltar from the Christian powers. He did not only lead a 5000-man strong ground force, in fact, he also commanded the navy towards Gibraltar to provide assistance for the ground force.This Muslim force was also joined by the Nasrid forces led by Sultan Muhammad b. Isma‘il b. al-Ahmar. This cooperation resulted in regaining Gibraltar in the year 733/133 (Ibn Khaldun, 1968; al-Salawi, 1954; al-Hariri, 1987). The role of the sultan or prince in being supreme commander leading his own navy force did not deny the function of individuals appointed as commander of the navy. As a rule, the sultan or prince would command the navy only for a certain special mission with the assistance of other commanders. This goes to show that the ruler himself led the mission if it was critical and important, showing the seriousness of the Marinid government to win in battle.

6. Vessels

Vessels or ships are most essential for the navy due to them being the main asset which function as vehicles of the navy, just as horses would be to the army. The shipbuilding industry was emphasized by the Marinid kingdom so that vessels were built at *Dar al-Sina*‘*ah* whenever the need arose. Thus the number of vessels for the Marinid navy varied and was not fixed, depending on the need and ruler in power.

According to Pyror, the structure and design of vessels during the Marinid era did not differ greatly from those of contemporary kingdoms, including Christian kingdoms. It was even not easy to differentiate between the Marinid vessels and those of other kingdoms. Usually, a vessel was equipped with three large sails. And some space on the ship was raised a little higher as a place to steer the ship, while a small space built at the middle of the ship was the place for the mast to survey the waters, whether to look out for enemy ships coming or to observe land surface ahead in the voyage (Pyror, 1988). The similarity in the structure and design was probably intentional due to the constant rivalry with Christian forces in al-Andalus, in order to compete with the strength of enemy vessels.

Vessels during the Marinid era may be divided into into two types, namely merchant ships and battleships. The location of al-Maghrib territory which faced the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea and the existence of *Dar al-Sina*‘*ah* and port had stimulated shipping activity. As a rule, merchant ships were used as transportation for trade in the Mediterranean Sea. The emergence of ports in al-Maghrib territory, such as Tanjah, Sabtah and Sala, had boosted trade relations through sea routes with various other ports such as Gibraltar, Almeria, Venice, Genoa and al-Iskandariyyah (Alexandria). In addition, merchant ships were also used to carry Muslim pilgrims from al-Maghrib to Mecca. Usually, merchant ships carrying pilgrims anchored at Alexandria for the pilgrims to continue their journey overland to Mecca (Pyror, 1988). However, the Marinid navy used battleships in carrying out missions such as enemy threats at sea, guarding the coastline and waters as well as carrying ground forces over to al-Andalus.The categories of Marinid military vessels were not very different from vessels of the Almohad era, that is, transport ships and battleships (al-‘Abbadi & ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, Undated). The general categorisation of types of Marinid military vessels was based on their function. However, al-Hamawi listed several types of military vessels used by the Marinid Kingdom into *al-Turad*, *al-Harraqah*, *al-Shalandi*, *al-*‘*Ishari*, *al-Jalasah*, *al-Butsah*, *al-Shabbak* and *al-Himalat* (al-Hamawi, 1945; Ashari, 2012).

Generally, Marinid military activities involved al-Andalus territory, particularly in facing the threat of Reconquest launched by the Christian powers. The request for help from the Nasrid Kingdom had caused the Marinid Kingdom to build and strengthen its navy for the mission of fighting the Christian powers. Among the steps taken was deploying ground forces to al-Andalus. As al-Maghrib and al-Andalus were separated by the Straits of Gibraltar, transport vessels became important in carrying out the mission of transporting ground forces across to al-Andalus. In the early stage, the Marinid Kingdom did not give priority to building of transport vessels. However, building of transport vessels began when Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub sent the military, horses and other equipment to al-Andalus in the year 673. At that time, transport vessels which brought the Marinid ground forces to al-Andalus was still small in number, of about 20 vessels. Nevertheless, the number of transport vessels afterwards increased according to need, particularly when the Marinid Kingdom frequently deployed its military to al-Andalus (Pyror, 1988; Musa, 1983).

Other than transport vessels, the Marinid navy was also strengthened with use of battleships. As a rule, battleships were used in battles at sea. In addition, the battleships also functioned to protect transport vessels against any enemy threats during operations to carry ground forces across to al-Andalus. Battleships stationed naval crew and were equipped with various fittings and armaments such as cannons and *manjaniq (*catapults). Due to this function, the number of Marinid battleships was increased as Christian battleships from Castile and Aragon frequently threatened

Marinid control in the Straits of Gibraltar. To prevent continuous threats by the Christian powers along the coastline of al-Maghrib, the Marinid Kingdom increased the number of battleships to block attacks and halt enemy movements from advancing into the Straits of Gibraltar and the coast of al-Maghrib (Pyror, 1988).

The number of battleships was not fixed but constantly varied. At the beginning of the Marinid Kingdom, the naval power was not developed and no battleships were built. During the ruleof Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub, the navy was first formed and a small number of battleships began to be built. The initial purpose was to transport the ground forces across the Straits to al-Andalus. However, as enemy threats continued in the waters of al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, more battleships were forced to be built. At the very least, the presence of battleships could block enemy invasion from continuously threatening the Marinid position and prevent the destruction of all facilities constructed at various places on the coast of al-Maghrib. In expeditions of crossing over to al-Andalus, beginning with 20 vessels for carrying ground forces in the year 673/1275, the number increased to 72 vessels in the year 678/1280 and declined to 36 vessels in the year 684/1286 (Musa, 1983; al-Hariri, 1987; al-Fasi, Undated; al-Suwaydan, 2005). The number of vessels increased more under the rule of Sultan Abu al-Hasan 'Ali. He had established a revolution and transformation towards strengthening Marinid naval power. During his rule, the building of battleships gathered pace. The naval revolution was also boosted by the construction of several watchtowers and fortresses in the area of *Dar al-Sina*'*ah*.

In the year 741/1340, Sultan Abu al-Hasan 'Ali had led his forces to go across al-Andalus while being escorted by 60 battleships, which before that had successfully defeated the naval forces of Castile dan Aragon (Robson, 1959). Banu Hafs Kingdom had also sent reinforcement of 16 vessels to the naval force against enemy invasion (al-Salawi, 1954; Ghallab, 2005). However, the largest number of Marinid battleships was 600 vessels at the time when Sultan Abu al-Hasan 'Ali returned to Fez by sea and deployed the military to regain the throne seized by Abu 'Inan Faris (al-'Abbadi & 'Abd al-'Aziz, Undated; Musa, 1983). The number of battleships built varied with the need, in addition to a number of ships which were destroyed in battle.. However, the navy revolution, particularly during the rule of Sultan Abu al-Hasan 'Ali, was reflected in the brisk activity of building a large number of vessels for use in transporting the Marinid ground forces to al-Andalus and in battles against Christian naval forces in the Straits of Gibraltar.

7. Conclusion

Naval power was an important component of the Marinid military and was frequently used to achieve any mission, particularly in military activity in al-Andalus. Threats from Christian powers caused the Marinid Kingdom to give attention to developing the navy as a step in blocking those threats and supporting the role of the ground forces. Among the efforts of the Marinid Kingdom in enhancing the capabilities of the navy was building a navy base or *Dar al-Sina*'*ah* in several strategic areas such as Sabtah, Tanjah, Sala and Gibraltar. The role of the navy base was not only as a gathering centre for the navy, but also as a shipyard to build battleships and other equipment. The base was also the place to launch any mission, whether it was a battle against enemies at sea or transporting ground forces to al-Andalus.

In addition, the Marinid Kingdom also gave attention to the process of building vessels as a step towards strengthening the naval force. The vessels were built according to scale and purpose of specific usage to ensure the vessel structure would endure in the battle zone. The Marinid Kingdom had taken a tribe to join the navy for their seafighting skills. In addition ,the Marinid ruler had also dominated the tribe of Banu al-'Azfi in the coastal area of al-Maghrib to fully utilize their capabilities at sea in order to strengthen the navy. The steps taken by the Marinid Kingdom showed their seriousness in enhancing naval capabilities at once supporting the role played by the Marinid ground forces in any mission. However, internal problems such as political turmoil and economic recession had adversely affected the process of strengthening the navy resulting in the decline of the kingdom, and the navy was relegated to merely a defensive and not the offensive role that it had during the kingdom's age of stability or glory.

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